

Habitat Restoration in the Georgia-Pacific Log Pond, Bellingham

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Abstract

In early 2001, Georgia-Pacific (G-P) completed construction of a combined sediment cleanup/habitat restoration project at the G-P Log Pond in Bellingham Bay. The project converted subtidal mudflat/debris and low intertidal riprap, all of which previously exceeded Washington State sediment quality standards, into clean intertidal and shallow subtidal silt and sand habitat. This project provided the opportunity to monitor improving habitat functions that the area now provides to salmon and their prey. Pre- and post-construction monitoring activities in the Log Pond have included detailed chemical monitoring, epibenthic/benthic organism monitoring, and juvenile salmonid sampling. Sediment, water, and biological tissue quality in the site area continues to be maintained within state standards protective of habitat functions. Monitoring results indicate that within several months of construction, epibenthic and benthic biomass, species richness, diversity and evenness within the Log Pond were similar to or better than levels seen at local reference stations. A comparison of pre- and post-construction monitoring results suggests increased utilization of the Log Pond by juvenile salmonids. Capping with clean sediments appears to be an effective method of concurrently achieving cleanup and habitat restoration goals for this site. Additional integrated cleanup and habitat restoration projects in Bellingham Bay will be discussed.